

Season 1 Episode 2: Blasphemy, Self-Sacrifice, To the Safety of the Universe

The light of the early morning moon crept on Trelok's bedroom, giving it a haunted appearance. A chill hung in the still air, causing him pull the covers closer to his chest.

"Trelok," a male voice whispered in the darkness. Its tone was not malevolent, nor did it betray any hostility. It was soothing, almost comforting, but demanding.

Opening his eyes, Trelok peeked over the covers. He recognized the voice. It was the same one that haunted him ever since he was old enough to acknowledge the world. He never saw the being in its physical form, but its calmness was eerie enough to render Trelok obedient to the creature's will. Such as the book of Salavene.

"Yes?" asked Trelok with an equally silent whisper. No response was forthcoming. So, pulling the covers over his head, he tried to return to sleep.

"Trelok, you have not forgotten, have you?" whispered the voice.

Trelok jolted upright, the covers thrown in front of him. The air became chillier, forcing him to cross his arms to control his shaking. "Of course I have not forgotten, wise one," he replied, forcing the words out of his trembling mouth. "But you said I had time--that *we* had time."

"You have until next month, Trelok," said the voice in a slightly louder tone.

Trelok's eyes became wide with surprise. "So soon?"

As if in response, the air at the foot of Trelok's bed became distorted. Ice crystals formed at the railings of the bed and the posts at the four corners. The light from the moon was obscured by ominous snowclouds. The distortion at the end of his bed started to gain definition, like the apparition of a creature, something dwarfed to fit inside the room when compared to its lifelike size.

A dragon.

The male dragon's scales were a fusion of greens, blues, and whites, like metallic armor. Each color was displayed depending on the angle of light hitting the scales. This dragon was special, Trelok knew. But before Trelok could think more about the dragon, his vision darkened. The last thing he felt was a strong weight pressing his body against the bed.

Trelok had dreams before. Many of them were pleasant, but all were irrelevant to his life. This one, he knew, would haunt him for all time.

The sky stretched an endless fire, the clouds as red and thick as the blood flowing through Trelok's veins. White lightning streaked across the sky, the resulting clash roared over the plains and shook the ground beneath Trelok's feet.

The clouds began to part as something massive entered the planet's atmosphere. The ship was massive--large enough to fit three of the biggest mountains inside. The hull breached the clouds, but its length was indeterminable. Smaller ships descended from the skies, flying in a V-like formation as they glided over the plains. Small beams of green light shot down upon the land. The smaller ships were thirsty, not for the cultivation and harvestation of the planet's precious resources, but for the life of the creatures that inhabit the planet.

From the horizon came a glittering cloud, ascending high and traveling fast to meet its adversary. The stars within the cloud parted, revealing the many thousands of dragons who came to defend their planet. They bore riders upon their backs and their hides were armored with the strongest of metals the Lekolai could possibly harvest from the galaxy. Then came something else: a fleet of ships that looked less malefic than the enemies from the sky. These ships charged fourth, each one shining like a newborn star as they prepared for their counterassault.

Explosions screamed across the battlefield. Shrapnel and debris scattered for hundreds of miles as ship after ship of the enemy fleet is destroyed. It seemed that the resistance was getting the upper hand. All of the hundred or so ships subordinate to the mothership were put out of commission. Then, just as the resistance began to advance upon the mothership's position in the sky, a ring of energy formed horizontally around its hull. It buzzed as the power charged up. What happened next was a complete disaster; a tragedy, if it were all real.

The ring exploded outward, transforming the clouds in the sky into a thick blanket of fire. The dragons were instantly victim to the blaze, especially when pieces of the fiery ocean fell towards the ground and burned through the wings of a couple of dragons. Their cries could be heard for miles, and Trelok, who had been captivated by the battle till now, could not help but tear up at the sight of such a loss.

The ships were next to fall. It was obvious that they were equipped with energy shields, but they were no match for the overwhelming power of fire. More explosions added to the already burning hot air that surrounded the few remaining dragons. It was too much for them to bear, and they perished without being able to fight back.

The mothership, now alone and free to do its will, began charging its primary weapon. It was designed to suit one purpose: to destroy planets.

All became silent, slow, almost still as if time itself was frozen. The beam fell from the sky with exaggerated ease. When it made impact, the blinding flash forced Trelok to cover his eyes. When he looked abroad, there was only a wall of fire.

Trelok found himself shivering uncontrollably on his bed. He was not cold. No. He was afraid. Afraid for what little time he had to convince those of his followers to band together and create what would be the instrument that will render aid to a dying universe.

"Now, you see," said the dragon. "War is close upon us, and although that particular point in time is not for another couple thousand years, it is what will come to pass if you cannot complete your mission. It is the reason for your existence."

Silence consumed Trelok's room. A breeze as cold as ice ran through the room, but it was so light in its touch that only the coldness could be felt. Darkness became Trelok's world for a few seconds. He pondered all that he saw, what was said, and the implications of the impromptu meeting.

It is the reason for my existence, thought Trelok. He stared off into the darkness, his expression blank as he took in all the information at once. *To recruit the soldiers and provide them with a means to fight this war.*

He blinked his eyes once—his first acknowledgement to the world around him.

I know what I have to do.

Trevon awoke in a heavy sweat.

Something was off about today. He couldn't put his finger on it, but he had a feeling it had something to do with the story the High Priest, Trelok, spoke of the day before. Anxious to be rid of the perspiration and wet dog smell, he immediately got out of bed and went to the wash room. There was still some water left in the wood tub from the day before—only those of higher social and political stature had the accommodation of fresh water for every bath.

Heated water from a bucket and open fire was usually a welcoming event that Trevon looked forward to eagerly, especially after a long day fixing up the Salavene Church. His muscles would cramp for days on end; the only reprieve he had was that water. This time, he welcomed the coolness of the wash. His body felt warmer than normal, yet the air resembled an early fall morning.

With his thoughts heavy on the day to come, Trevon dried off and got dressed in his hooded cloak. As a servant to the high priest, he was required to wear one. Knowing that the faithful

crowds would be arriving any minute to hear the rest of Trelok's story, Trevon briskly walked out to the hallway. At the end, he stopped at the doorway, thoughtful of the masterpiece Trelok had painted upon the vaulted ceiling with his own hands. It was an accomplishment that should go down in history and appreciated. Then, taking one last deep breath, Trevon opened the door to the Hall. He froze mid-step beyond the threshold.

What in God's name—?

From the balcony, the middle aisle, the benches, to both sides and back of the Hall . . . the place was overwhelmingly packed. Trevon would not have anticipated this sort of attraction over a small story, even from one as renowned in their home town as Trelok. But these people did not look like they were from Salavene.

Word travels fast it seems, thought Trevon, who walked across the front stage to the other side where Trelok slept. *So many people*, he noticed, looking at the group as they watched him cross the width of the stage. Once he was on the other side, he quickly opened the door and secluded himself by stepping into the long hallway leading to Trelok's room.

Trevon started at a brisk walk, anxious to tell Trelok the news of the gathering. His walk began to slow as the air became chillier. The torches lining the hallway began to dim somewhat, and a grey mist spewed out the crack at the bottom of Trelok's room. The phenomenon was enough to make Trevon stop and stare for a moment, his heart pounding wildly. Then, he thought, *The High Priest is in danger!*

Starting off into a run, Trevon scaled the distance in only a few seconds. Up ahead, he noticed for a split second that the mist collided with some sort of invisible barrier, which his body slammed into straight away. He fell back, the wind knocked out of his chest. The feeling of suffocation continued; he couldn't inhale at all. He couldn't move a single inch of his body. His vision became distorted, darkening more and more until, as life was about to leave him, he was able to breathe in as much air as he could manage.

Trevon coughed once, his chest now burning harshly. He rolled over to his side to recuperate his lost strength, but then the realization of the moment caught up to him: *the High Priest is in trouble!*

Rejuvenated with that stark reality, Trevon got to his feet, and stumbled as quick as he could to Trelok's door. Unable to keep himself aloft in his haste, he used the weight of his body to slam his shoulder against the door, ramming it open. The air lost its frigidity by the time he entered Trelok's room by falling on his side. The mist was gone, and the lights shone in their original intensity.

"Didn't your parents teach you to knock, boy?" growled Trelok, who approached from a wash room. Once he was finished drying his hair, he reached down, grabbed Trevon's arm, and pulled him up to his feet with a jerk. "So? What were you thinking, boy?"

“I was thinking you were in danger,” Trevon growled back. “Didn’t you see the smoke? I thought your room was on fire!” *Honestly, with all that cold air, it seems impossible,* he thought, reconsidering his previous declaration.

Trelok extended his arms out wide and turned, searching for the mysterious fire. “I don’t see any fire, nor do I smell any smoke!” He turned and looked at Trevon suspiciously, “Have you been smoking those healing herbs again?”

“Forget about it,” barked Trevon, who turned and said as he walked away. “Get dressed; you have a much larger crowd today.”

“Hey, wait a second,” yelled Trelok, stumbling out the doorway. “Just how many assembled today?”

Trevon stopped for a second, thoughtful, then said, “Maybe sixty, seventy—there are not enough chairs.”

“Alright,” he replied, rubbing his brow. “Go out to the cabin and grab some chairs.”

“With all due respect, High Priest, I don’t think there is enough room for chairs,” countered Trevon.

Trelok lit up like a loose cannon, “Just go—!” He stopped himself short, ashamed. Then, in a calmer tone, he said, “Please, go find something to do. Maybe . . . keep the guests entertained until I am ready for them—they’re early.”

Taken aback, Trevon could only bow slightly and turn on his heels, leaving Trelok to stand in the doorway. *Something is going on, I just don’t know what.* Indeed, it was like his mind was playing tricks on him. *The smoke, the bitter cold, and . . . that burst of rage—I don’t understand.*

The dusk has descended upon me, thought Trelok, closing the door and returning his room to darkness. *If what the dragon said is true, then only seclusion from my subjects await me. But to what end will my journey bring?*

Whispers from the dragon reverberated through his mind: *So dark is the dusk, so inevitably is the light of dawn. Venture fourth, stay in the shadows in all but the unlikeliest of places, but fear not whatever predicament you find yourself to be.*

So twisted the dragon’s tongue was, but Trelok could not argue the comfort of his words: *so dark is the dusk, so inevitably is the light of dawn.* There was hope, he knew, but it will come at a cost. He knew he could speak tens of thousands of words and still not sway the crowds one bit.

Trelok stood with a stiff back, his eyes now fallen to his unclenched hand below. Thoughts of fate and destiny lingered in his mind like a cloud of ash and dust, threatening to suffocate him and extinguish the light from his soul. He closed his eyes and swept away the negativity that became him, and then, very softly, he whispered, “Now is the time—the time to unveil the truth.”

As quick as a blur, Trelok opened his eyes, snatched the cloak and hood from the hook beside his door, and stormed out the door. He continued to the end of the hall and the door, from which played a beautiful melody. It was so peaceful it stilled his footsteps, bringing him to a silent sneak as he approached the sound.

It seems Trevon has kept a few things from me, he thought as he opened the door slowly. The mesmerizing vocals of Trevon became louder. Entering the Hall, Trelok watched as the crowd kept their eyes on the entertainment. Some were humming with the flow of the music. Then, one by one, the crowd averted their attention to Trelok.

The music stopped,

Approaching from behind, Trelok placed a hand on Trevon's shoulder and whispered something in his ear, causing the vocalist to freeze, dumbstruck with surprise, and then slowly walk away. Trelok watched his servant exit through a side passage. Then, with the words of the past heavy on his mind, he approached the podium. He gazed upon the crowd.

"Fellow Lekolai," he began, his voice booming deeply across the hall. He allowed the sound to travel for a short while, after which he continued, "for years we have been told *lies!* From our birth, to our resurrection, to our *salvation!* *We have been deceived!*" He took a deep breath, calming himself down.

To himself, he thought, *Now, I have their attention.*

"By now you are all wondering what it is exactly you have been deceived of. I will admit that I have questioned my source from time to time, but I could not refute his claims, for within them I saw the validity. I know it is answers you all seek and it is answers you shall receive, but they must come later. For now, let us continue our story of Evalancia."

Reaching to the podium, Trelok opened the Book of Salavene. He wrote nothing of what he was about to speak—he had not the time to write it all down—but he knew the story by heart . . . like a memory never forgotten. The audience stared up at him as he began, all of them anxious:

The sound of crashing water echoed in the distance, rebounding off the many rocky surfaces in the subterranean cave. Evalancia's head throbbed with pain, her breathing was labored, but she was alive. That's all that mattered.

Evalancia opened one eye, conscious of another creature's breathing close by. She couldn't see it; was it behind her? She tried twisting her neck, but a pain at the back of her skull kept her head still. Submitting to her unruly body, she fell asleep.

It was not long until Evalancia awoke again. The same sound of crashing water dominated her hearing, but she could feel something grazing against her side. The breathing from the creature was stronger than before, moving from one side of her body to the next.

Something resembling the lower jaw of a serpent's head laid on her back.

Surprised, Evalancia launched herself quickly to the other side of the cavern, startling the serpent next to her. She stood on all fours, what remained of her tail was stiff behind her, and she growled menacingly.

The serpent was not so threatening. It held its head low, and by its muscular frame it was unmistakably male. The male serpent had all the characteristics of a strong, young dragon. Yet, Evalancia noticed, were his eyes. Blue were his irises, much like the color of its hide, but in those eyes was not ferocity, but apology.

Evalancia's gaze switched to the male serpent's fully formed tail, which remained slack against the rocky floor. Its breathing was slow, its teeth hidden, and its claws clenched. There was absolutely nothing to suggest that the dragon meant her any harm.

A consciousness other than her own pressed against hers. Evalancia growled threateningly. The serpent inclined its head and laid down, watching her cautiously. The male serpent's consciousness fell away, leaving her alone within the confines of her mind.

Evalancia calmed down and observed her surroundings. The crashing water came somewhere behind a bend in the cave, where it is darkest. Somewhere beyond the bend to her right was a flood of light, but she did not know what the source was. She knew she had to escape; she could not survive in the cave for long.

Where am I? she thought, which became the most important question to her at the moment. And who is this? A memory crossed her: it was when she fell unconscious—or died, whatever actually happened. A blue serpent blended in with the murky waters of the deep, different from the various others of its kind. It was recognizable; it was the one that roared mournfully into the deep as she passed away.

Then it hit her: the same being from the group of dragons, the same being that lay comfortably across from her; they were one and the same. He had saved her life. Did that make him an ally? No, she thought, glum. It does not. Only a desperate serpent looking for an easy companion. He will soon learn that I am not so easily impressed.

The male serpent shifted his position and attempted to get up. Evalancia hissed in response, forcing the serpent to stop and look at her curiously. Then, slower this time, he crawled over to the waterfall at the end of the cave. Looking over at her, he used his wing to block the water's path to the ground and revealed the exit for her. He shook his head as the water struck him, then snorted a plume of black smoke at the entrance. He nudged his head to the entrance, as if beckoning Evalancia to follow him.

What do you want? Evalancia asked, her subconscious still secluded and fully fortified. Cautiously, she got to all fours and walked to the exit. She watched him carefully for any signs of aggression—or the complete opposite, which he would regret. Her claws remained extended, scraping loudly against the rocky floor as she crossed the distance. Once there, she had to ignore the water droplets that splashed against her head as she looked out at the ocean. Something was keeping the entirety of the ocean at bay, only allowing the small waterfall to cascade down from a separate hole.

What magic is this? Certainly no serpent of the sea could be capable of such a feat. No dragon could be capable of keeping the ocean's waters at bay for any extended amount of time.

The male serpent edged too close for comfort, and Evalancia snapped her jaws once as a warning. He held back, but when he did Evalancia noticed a disturbance in the waters. A fleet of

dragons were swimming through the water. They were not serpents; dragons could survive underwater for at least an hour. These were the same dragons that were hunting her when it all started.

The male serpent nudged Evalancia's right shoulder, causing her to back a step and snap at him again, followed by a short growl in agitation. He simply looked at her sympathetically and laid down in front of the mouth of the cave, moving his wing and allowing the water to fall behind him.

Evalancia backed up a little more and looked at the male serpent for a long while, debating how she would escape her perilous situation. Blood thirsty dragons outside and a crazed dragon sitting right in front of me. The situation was worse than she previously thought.

A rumbling came from the male serpent's stomach, but he made no move to go out and hunt for fish. Evalancia considered the chance he would leave, and then she retreated to a far corner. Laying down, she kept one eye on the male dragon as she began to rest. Her stomach growled, and she noticed for the first time that she was getting hungry. The male serpent lifted its head, but she hissed at him to stay put. He listened, closing his eyes and preparing for rest.

When she awoke later a horrible hunger pervaded her mind. Her mind felt weak, her heart could be felt in her chest, and she could barely lift a claw off the floor. Ahead of her, the male serpent no longer guarded the entrance—he wasn't in the cave. Using the reserves of her energy, she looked around for the serpent, but he was nowhere in sight.

A loud roar sounded somewhere in the distance, followed by another and another. Getting up, her limbs shaking terribly, Evalancia stood at a guarded position. If any of those wild dragons came in, she knew she could ram them back into the ocean and use it to her advantage.

But it was not the wild dragons—it was the male serpent from before. It had a dead shark in its mouth. Considering the sight of Evalancia's threatening position, the male serpent laid the shark on the ground and nudged it toward her.

Evalancia lowered her snout, considering the offering for a moment. Then, when the male serpent's stomach growled again, he backed up and left the cave. Evalancia stayed rooted in place for a long minute before hunger took the best of her, and she jumped on the dead shark like it was still alive, and began feasting on it.

Slowly, strength returned to Evalancia's limbs. Her mind began to clear and she felt steadiness return to her world. The feeling of her heart beating began to subside to a dull throb—more like a painful memory that she hoped to never endure again. When she was finished, she backed into her corner and closed her eyes. She did not fall asleep this time; she simply rested to let her meal digest.

Within an hour, a disturbance outside put Evalancia on alert. It was not a roar, it was more like a hiss. Then another noise and a vibration, like something was slammed against the roof of the cave. Then the roar.

Evalancia stood, her legs strong and steady this time. A series of squeals and roars came, pained and obviously in danger. Placing her hind leg against the wall, she crouched to prepare for whatever came for her.

Splash!

A large dragon rammed itself through the opening of the cave, but before it could lay eyes on Evalancia, she had already taken a leap. She immediately clamped her teeth down on the dragon's neck and pushed with her body out to the open ocean. The dragon roared painfully as it flew back, its neck bleeding profusely. Once in the water, Evalancia kicked it away, ripping a portion of flesh from its neck as it descended to the ocean floor.

Another roar came from above, this time it was weak and near death. Her worry intensified; if it was the serpent in danger, she would have to help him—she owed him that. So, launching herself from the lip of the cave, she ascended until she could see the confrontation: Two of the wild dragons had the male serpent pinned against a rocky shelf; all three were wounded, but the serpent was much worse. There was a gash along the side of its belly, with blood clouding the ocean around him.

There was something else, though: his tail, it shone like a lantern!

Evalancia stayed silent and propelled herself to the two wild dragons. She pounced on the first one while transforming into the serpent. With the one pinned to the ground, her claws digging deep into the wound on its shoulder, she attempted to launch a ball of fire at the other. Only, instead of fire, electricity in the form of a sphere launched at the dragon. It tried to evade, but it was too late: the ball of electricity slammed against its chest, erupting a large flare that blinded everything—even Evalancia—for a few seconds.

When the light dissipated, Evalancia quickly snatched at the subdued dragon's throat and ripped it, severing its head. The head rolled towards the male serpent, but it stopped when an invisible barrier blocked its path. Intrigued, she approached the insignificant head and nudged it with her snout, noticing with surprise that it was indeed blocked. Looking at the male serpent, she nudged against the invisible barrier, staring at him expectantly. He seemed confused for a moment, but then realized he had failed to lower the barriers and did so.

Advancing to his mangled position, the blood continuing to gush out of his wound, Evalancia looked over his wounds. Then it happened again: the male serpent tried to gain access into Evalancia's mind. She allowed it, but stayed alert.

Heal me, he said immediately. His tone was soft—too soft for a male dragon.

She looked over at him with a perplexed gaze. How do you suppose I do that? She continued to look over his wounds, while at the same time searching through her mind for a solution to her problem. Without the male serpent hearing, she thought, I obviously cannot move him, but heal? I have never done that before—not even to myself. It would have helped me a lot before.

All dragon mates are capable of healing each other, he explained innocently. She shot him an angry look.

You are terribly mistaken if you think I have consented in any way—” *She stopped herself short, thought about it for a moment, then said,* Besides, since we are *not* what you think we are, how did you heal me in the first place? I am beholden to no one but myself.

An intimate connection like the one I suggested is not required, *he continued.*

Evalancia reached over and placed a heavy claw over his wound, clenching it slowly. Then what is required?

The male dragon growled lightly in pain, then explained when Evalancia eased off of him, Only a connection of the mind is re—

Evalancia squeezed his wound harder, causing him to roar in response. She stabbed her head in front of his face and said, I am sorry, your crying distracted me from what you said. Want to try again?

After his initial fit subsided, his eyes squeezed shut and his body tense as a cornered wolf, he asked, Would you let the one who saved your life die? Right before your eyes? You have nothing; no family, no offspring, no dam, no sire—absolutely nothing. Are you so stubborn that you cannot fall for at least one companion?

Evalancia eased off him again and considered his words thoughtfully before responding. If you were hunted down by blood crazed dragons, you would understand.

I can imagine, *he replied softly,* but I would like to think I would do you this one favor if our lives were reversed.

Evalancia knew she could not just leave the male serpent to the slaughter, but she also knew that staying in one place for long meant death for her. The only way out of her situation seemed to fulfill the serpent’s wishes. It’s not so easy, she finally said after a minute. It’s not like I can switch emotions whenever I please.

Yes, you can, *he said, gazing at her intently.* You simply lack the knowledge on how. If you can let go of everything that has haunted you in the past—the dragons pursuing you, for instance—and concentrate only on the things that matter most between you and I. I saved your life and I kept you healthy; does that account for so little to you?

You saved my life, for that I am grateful and forever in your debt, *said Evalancia,* but it seems that one act of good cannot let me forget of the lifetime of horror and betrayal I have endured.

The male serpent laid his head down on the rocky shelf and blew out a plume of black smoke. Closing his eyes, he retracted from Evalancia’s mind and secluded himself from the rest of the world.

The least I can do is ease his passing, *thought Evalancia.* But once he does, I will have to leave. *Laying down, she eased her head across one of her arms and watched the male serpent rest. He seemed so calm considering the threat to his life. His breathing was even, his eyes were content. Then something occurred to her: she had no idea what his name was.*

Approaching his subconscious telepathically, she asked, What is your name?

He didn't respond—in fact, he had his barriers erected fully around his mind.

For the first time since meeting the male serpent, she felt . . . neglected. It was an odd emotion that she was unfamiliar with. Then another emotion: simmering anger. If he wants to die alone, then perhaps I should let him.

Ignoring the blood that continued to fog the water around her, Evalancia leaped off the cave's roof and headed for the surface. After swimming for only a few seconds, she was high enough to notice a disturbance in the distance. Stopping, she looked abroad and noticed five dragons, all of them heading right for the male serpent's impending grave. Thoughts of that serpent's soon painful death gave her a change of heart. They were approaching fast, so she had to make a decision—and quick.

How am I supposed to take on all five? It seemed impossible. Still, she had to try. No, should I let him suffer a slow death, or let the dragons finish him off quickly? A quick death seems merciful.

Having made her decision, she began ascending again. Then another mental burst of indecision stopped her. What if they torture him? What then? With an agitated growl, she swam off to the side where a rocky shelf overlooked the male serpent's position, and waited.

It did not take long for the dragon party to arrive, but at the site of the battle and not at the serpent's position.

A thought ran across Evalancia's mind, Who am I to leave this serpent to his fate? Is it so hard for me to do what I must to save his life? He may very well be the only chance I have to continue my bloodline—dangerous as it is. Perhaps . . . perhaps I shouldn't. Who would place their offspring in as much danger as I have found throughout my life? What caring mother would do that? Why would he propose such a thing?

The party was getting closer and closer to the male serpent's position. One of them flew up to the cave where Evalancia's meal was left half-eaten. Surely they would recognize the scent of two dragons that have gone missing and immediately hunt. It wouldn't take long for them to find the serpent.

Two of the dragons launched themselves above the sea floor and ascended to the surface to get some air. Aware that they could easily spot her, Evalancia backed away behind a boulder and waited for them to surface.

Now there is only three, she recounted in her mind. Then, a shadow crawled to the place she was standing just moments ago—they had found her. That was quick. Is he alone? Shifting her head to the side, she looked around the boulder and noticed a lone red dragon, young, sniffing the area. Then, with one blood-shot red eye, it looked directly at her and roared.

There was no time: Evalancia launched from her hiding place and grabbed the dragon's neck before it could react. Clenching her jaws tightly, she shook her head violently and snapped its spine, then easily dragged it back to her hiding place. She noticed immediately that the two dragons that had surfaced were descending upon her position.

Reacting quickly, she laid down, closed her eyes, and positioned the red dragon's neck above hers. The dead dragon's blood seeped onto her blue flesh, making it appear as though she had been grievously wounded.

A dull bang resonated through the rocky cliff as the two dragons landed on the edge and made their way to the boulder, following the trail of blood that was their ally's. Evalancia waited patiently as one of the dragons turned its head around the boulder and hissed, noticing her body limp on the ground. It lowered its head and sniffed at the wound on her neck.

Snap!

Quick as a snake, Evalancia aimed at the violet dragon's neck, but it retracted quickly and she could only grab its lower jaw. This dragon, too, was young. Overpowering the dragon, she placed herself on top of it and, using her superior jaw muscles, broke the dragon's lower jaw. It cried, letting loose a terrible shriek that irritated Evalancia's hearing. It also distracted her from the other dragon, which slammed into her side. She tumbled violently away from the bloody mess, with the larger dragon following very close behind her.

Coordinating the speed of her tumble, she used her hind legs to propel herself into the air. The dragon pursuing her, also red, slammed against her chest, clamping its serrated teeth into her neck.

Evalancia roared angrily. She kicked and thrashed, cutting a gash into the dragon's stomach. It let go with a vicious hiss and allowed her to fall to the ground. Using the brief moment of freedom, she cocked her bloody neck back, and then released a ball of electricity at the remaining dragon. It worked. With a shower of sparks and a cry of pain, the red dragon fell to its side. It convulsed for a few seconds, but died soon after.

A familiar roar sounded in the distance. It was weak, obviously in enormous pain, and very close to death.

Evalancia's heart fell. She ran to the edge of the cliff, leaving the dead to remain behind her. All that remained of the serpent's position was a fog of blood and two bodies which were visible on the edge of the roof.

Another body was left in its own fog of blood on the cave's entrance.

Leaping off the edge, Evalancia dove down to the cave entrance. Worry filled her mind greater than it ever had before. She did not want the male serpent to die—not like this. There was something else blossoming inside her . . . it was dormant, but existed nevertheless. She cared about the serpent's well-being. She could not let him die. She couldn't.

Once on the ground, she first observed the deep gouges in the serpent's neck, then the old wounds that were existent before the fight. But how could he have fought off two young and healthy dragons? The thought of it shocked Evalancia.

I am such a fool, she told herself. My own stubbornness caused this. She laid down next to the dead serpent and laid her head next to his. Is it too late? The possibility of reviving the dead serpent seemed naïve, but she had to try. So, she searched her mind for all the reasons she

needed to find an attraction towards him. The fact he saved her and kept her healthy. Then his physique, which was stronger than most dragons of the sky. He was unique: he had the ability of telekinesis, but he was great at it. All of these things made the serpent all the more likeable.

The more and more she thought about the now-dead serpent, the more she came to like him . . . but it wasn't enough for what she wanted to accomplish.

Not enough.

Realizing that she had doomed the serpent, she closed her eyes. A tear fell, but no more. She withdrew into the deepest recesses of her mind and closed herself off to the world. If an enemy sought her blood, then she would let them take it.

What I have done is unforgiveable, *she said*. Nothing can atone for this. Nothing.

Slowly, within the agony of her mind, she fell into a deep trance-like state. Not so much sleeping, but in a coma. A flash of light erupted beyond her eye lids, followed by a yell of something . . . not a dragon. No, it sounded almost—Sapien.

Trevon listened from atop a balcony as Trelok concluded the episode: “No, it sounded almost—Sapien.”

A whistling sound came from below, then a *thud!* as the High Priest's body struck the floor, an arrow sticking out of his chest, and blood pooling around his body.